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THE LISBON EARTHQUAKE: A STUDY IN RELIGIOUS VALUATION

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If religion be what Höffding holds it to be, a belief in the conservation of values, then every instance of apparent destruction of values is for philosophy of religion a peculiarly poignant problem. At the present time we are looking back with horror on the destruction of values by the hand of man in the world-war and by the hand of Nature in the dread scourge of the Spanish influenza. Analogous instances abound in human history.

On November 1, 1755, there occurred one such event, known to history as the Lisbon earthquake. An event appalling in the suddenness and extent of the devastation which it wrought, it raised again for all thoughtful minds the problem of religion in acute empirical form: If values are thus destroyed, how can religion be true? To survey the intellectual reactions called forth in great minds by this event may help us both to understand the thought of the enlightenment, and, more important, to glean some suggestions for the philosophical interpretation of the religious valuation of experience.

I

The Lisbon earthquake came to a Europe enlightened, rationalistic, optimistic. The optimistic phase of eighteenth-century thought was most seriously disturbed by the catastrophe. Optimism had received its classical expression at the hands of Leibnitz and Pope. In order to understand the "apperceptive mass" with which Europe envisaged the event at Lisbon, it is therefore desirable to survey the relevant ideas of the two writers just mentioned.

Leibnitz expressed his optimistic ideas in the *Théodicée*, published in 1710 in answer to Pierre Bayle's *Réponse à un provincial*, in which Bayle had held that the moral and physical ills of life were

such that one might well assume two ultimate principles, one good and one evil. Leibnitz wrote the *Théodicée* to prove that this world is good, indeed the best of possible worlds, chosen by an all-wise, all-good Creator.¹ It is not necessary to repeat here all the arguments of that remarkable product of philosophical theology. It will suffice to call attention to a few of its outstanding ideas. Leibnitz writes from the point of view of faith in the Christian religion, and undertakes to show that such faith is in harmony with reason. For this faith, the participation of God in the existence of evil is the crucial instance. "Supreme wisdom, united with a goodness no less infinite, could not fail to choose the best"; if God is to be what revelation proclaims and faith accepts, the actual universe must be the best among all possible worlds. This can be true only if details are judged from the point of view of the whole, for nothing exists or has significance by itself, "tout est lié dans la nature"—in Nature everything is connected. There are, it is true, apparent evils here below. God sends us unhappiness, as a result of original sin our vices surpass our virtues, and "a single Caligula, a Nero has done more [evil] than an earthquake." But whatever the sorrows or the sins of humanity, the optimistic faith remains unaffected, for "it is sufficient in relation to God that there is incomparably more good than evil in the universe." For finite minds, evil must be, as a consequence of finiteness; a defect, something negative which vanishes when the whole is known. For these and other familiar reasons, Leibnitz regards theistic optimism as rationally justified.

Pope is to be set alongside of Leibnitz as the second great prophet of optimism for the enlightenment. The *Essay on Man*, published 1732-34, Pope's poetical version of Bolingbroke's moral philosophy, was said by Voltaire to be "the most beautiful, the most awful, the most sublime didactic poem that has ever been written in any language."² In 1738 Voltaire paid Pope the

¹ All citations are from the edition of his *Opera* published in Berlin, 1840. Sections 1, 8, 119, 259, 262, and 378 are referred to in the text above. The translations from this and other works in foreign languages are made by the present writer.

² *Pope's Complete Poetical Works*, Cambridge edition, Boston and New York, 1903. For the foregoing quotation see p. 15. The *Essay on Man* is to be found on pp. 137 ff.

sincere flattery of imitation in his *Discours en vers sur l'homme*. That the optimism of the admired *Essay* was essentially the same as the Leibnitzian, a few citations will suffice to show.

Of systems possible, if 'tis confest
That wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all must fall or not coherent be,
And all that rises rise in due degree;
Then in the scale of reas'ning life 'tis plain
There must be, somewhere, such a rank as Man.
Respecting Man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.

Pope's God is one

Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall.

Should wretched humanity object, and "cry, if man's unhappy, God's unjust," Pope answers, "In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies."

Leibnitz had specifically brushed earthquakes aside as relatively justifiable in comparison with Nero or Caligula. So Pope:

But errs not Nature from this gracious end
When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep
Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep?
"No," 'tis replied, "the first Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial but by general laws."
If plagues or earthquakes break not Heav'n's design
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?

The scriptures of optimism thus expressly insure against loss by earthquake:

And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear, *Whatever is, is right.*

This familiar optimism of Leibnitz and Pope is characterized by one outstanding trait: that of regarding the universe as a whole (not unlike Bosanquet, for all the differences) as ultimately the only object of value. The universal welfare or fitness is the only standard of worth; so far as particulars and individuals are concerned value-distinctions literally have no real meaning. "God loves," says Pope, "from whole to parts"; yet not the parts, not

man, but "the universal cause," "that chain which links th' immense design," "whatever is," "tout," is the truly valuable. Kant in his *Versuch einiger Betrachtungen über den Optimismus* (1759) puts the Leibnitzian view in a nutshell when he says, "Dass das Ganze das beste sei, und alles um des Ganzen willen gut sei." In the first epistle of the *Essay* Pope exclaims,

All this dread order break—for whom? for thee?
Vile worm! O madness! pride! impiety!

Human beings have, then, no rights which reality ought to respect. Individuals are vile worms; only the dread order is worthful. The process of valuation for Pope and Leibnitz consists in setting vile worms in their place in the dread order; that is, in relating the part to the whole. This is the triumph of optimistic rationalism.

In the year of the Lisbon earthquake, A. F. Reinhard's prize essay for the Berlin Academy of Sciences was entitled "*Le Système de Pope sur la perfection du monde comparé avec celui de M. de Leibnitz, avec un examen de l'Optimisme.*" The very word optimism was coined during this period. Morize¹ finds the first occurrence of the word in Castel's review of the Chevalier de Jancourt's translation of the *Théodicée*, in the year 1737.

II

To a Europe taught thus to be smugly content with everything in spite of anything, there came tidings of a fact that forced its way through the artificial defenses of theories and formulae, and challenged the easy-going optimism of the century.

November 1, 1755, All Saints' Day, the churches of Lisbon, Portugal, were crowded, the city was in festal array. Suddenly at 9:00 A.M. came an earthquake shock, quickly followed by two others. Churches crashed to the ground, worshipers were buried beneath ruins. About one-quarter of the houses in the city were destroyed. A stone quay on which 3,000 had taken refuge was engulfed by the Tagus, after which a huge tidal wave swept away all within its reach. Fires broke out in many parts of the city.

¹ Andre Morize, *Voltaire, Candide ou l'Optimisme*. Paris, 1913. Hereafter referred to as Morize.

Looting flourished. Estimates of the dead varied from 30,000 to 100,000. The vibrations of this earthquake made themselves felt practically all over Europe. And what was true in the physical world was, if possible, even more true in the intellectual realm. Scarcely any single natural phenomenon of modern times has aroused so much philosophical debate.

III

If any one individual was the eighteenth century in epitome it was Voltaire. His evaluation of the Lisbon earthquake would naturally be our first object of investigation.

Prior to 1755 Voltaire was an admirer and imitator of Pope. His mistress, Emilie de Breteuil, was a Leibnitzian. Voltaire therefore is commonly regarded as a typical eighteenth-century optimist, shocked by the earthquake into cynical pessimism. Morize seems to have proved that this is not true; that the influence of Pope held Voltaire only for the decade of the thirties. Leibnitz, at any rate, he rejected in the early forties. Voltaire's writings on Lisbon, therefore, had for their background, not his own optimism rudely overthrown, but rather the optimistic fashion of the day, which he himself had already for more than a decade rejected.¹

The period immediately preceding the earthquake found Voltaire under the shadow of the death of his mistress (1749). His letters reveal doubts of freedom, the soul, of all metaphysics, and of optimism; Morize finds a more discouraged pessimism in Voltaire's letters of 1754 than, say, in the conclusion of *Candide*. On receiving news of the disaster at Lisbon, he writes twenty letters which, according to Morize, reveal a triumphant pessimist. It may be that Morize overestimates the consistency of Voltaire's pessimism in this period, for as late as 1752 he could still say, "There is more good than evil on earth," and in the *Poème sur la loi naturelle*, directed to Frederick the Great, he could still praise Pope, and could devote the entire second part of the poem to

¹ Otto Lempp, *Das Problem der Theodicee in der Philosophie und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts bis auf Kant und Schiller*. Leipzig, 1910. This work, not available in connection with the present study, may be consulted for the optimism of the period.

"Answers to Objections against the Principles of a Moral Universe" and "Proof of This Truth." It may well be that Lisbon found Voltaire not so clearly a triumphant pessimist as rather a divided self, shifting from one mood to the other, not satisfied with any conclusion.

On December 16, 1755, Voltaire published the *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne en 1755, ou examen de cet axiome: Tout est bien*, which appeared in a new edition, with notes, in March of the following year. In the preface Voltaire pays his respects to Pope, "the illustrious Pope," who "enveloped in his immortal verse the systems of Leibnitz, of Lord Shaftesbury, and of Lord Bolingbroke," and informs the reader that he is not attacking Pope, but is only warning against an abuse of Pope's maxim, "Whatever is, is right," "taken in an absolute sense and without hope of a future." For that abuse he has no mercy. For if philosophers had said to those escaped from Lisbon, "Whatever is, is right; the heirs of the dead will increase their fortunes; the masons will earn money by rebuilding houses; the beasts will derive nourishment from the corpses buried in the ruins: it is the necessary result of necessary causes; your particular evil is nothing, you contribute to the general good," "such a discourse had certainly been as cruel as the earthquake was tragical." Only revelation and "the hope of a development of our being in a new order of things . . . can console us," and "the goodness of Providence is the only asylum to which man can have recourse in the darkness of his reason."

These same ideas are more vividly developed in the poem itself. The poet summons all men, and especially "deceived philosophers, who cry, *Tout est bien*," to behold the fate of Lisbon. He declares that no principles of eternal and necessary law nor of moral retribution justify the destruction of Lisbon, a city scarcely worse than London or Paris. "*Lisbonne est abîmée, et l'on danse à Paris.*" He resents the suggestion of Pope that such thoughts arise from pride. Would the universe really have been worse had Lisbon not been engulfed? If so, so much the worse for natural law! Passionately asserting his belief in a just and beneficent God, and at the same time in the rights of humanity, he asks the ancient question, Why must I suffer? "I live, I feel, my oppressed

heart begs succor of the God who formed it." He refuses the optimistic reply that "this misfortune is the good of another being," on the ground that other beings, including the lower animals, are subject to the same pains. One can only regard the "tout est bien" as an illusion, and hope that "one day all will be well." He closes with the thought of submission to Providence and hope of a future life.

Such was Voltaire's first reaction to the earthquake. His fundamental judgment is clearly that the earthquake has no value, but only disvalue. There seem to be two reasons in his mind for this judgment. It has no value, first, because it produces pain, and secondly, because it finds no rational justification from the point of view of the victims themselves. To them, the universe is irrelevant. They perish. Here Voltaire pays tribute to the worth of individual human personality. If there is value anywhere, we find him presupposing that it has its seat in the individual consciousness. What Pope had condemned as pride Voltaire takes to be the basis of all value. What Pope had regarded as the basis of all value Voltaire scorns as cruel and misleading.

Three years after the second edition of the *Poème*, Voltaire returns to the theme of Lisbon in one of his most brilliant skits, *Candide ou l'Optimisme, traduit de l'allemand par Mr. le docteur Ralph*. The popular impression made by this book may be judged from the fact that Morize lists 43 editions as having appeared up to 1789.

Candide is obviously written to ridicule the theories of Leibnitz, Wolff, and Pope. A brief summary of the plot will set the main ideas before the reader. The scene is laid in the home of a Westphalian baron, where we meet Candide, said to be the baron's sister's illegitimate son, the baron's daughter Cunégonde, and Pangloss, family tutor and instructor in metaphysico-theologico-cosmolo-nigology, i.e., Wolff's Leibnitzianism. Pangloss is an invincible optimist, who sees that noses are providentially made for glasses, stones for chateaux, and legs for trousers; and who condemns "Tout est bien" as stupid; we should say rather, "Tout est au mieux." But the best of possible chateaux has its faults; and Candide, too intimate with Cunégonde, flees the country.

Here begins a series of adventures in which optimism is to be put to a thorough test. Candide suffers the horrors of war among the Bulgarians, and then, arrived in Holland, meets Pangloss, now a diseased beggar, who reports the chateau destroyed, and the baron, the baroness, and Cunégonde killed. Candide already exclaims, "Cunégonde dead! Oh, best of worlds, where art thou?" But Pangloss is still optimistic; even the venereal disease from which he now suffers, and which, according to Voltaire, afflicts 20,000 out of every army of 30,000, is "an indispensable thing in the best of worlds, a necessary-ingredient." "The more particular evils there are, the more everything is good."

Meanwhile the pair take ship for Lisbon, just in time to experience tempest, tidal wave, shipwreck, earthquake, and fire, all of which are vividly described. In it all Pangloss remains calm, pointing out that there is nothing new at Lisbon, "same causes, same effects," and "whatever is, is right." Following the earthquake, an *auto da fé* is carried out by the wise men of the country to prevent the earth from quaking again. On this occasion Pangloss is hung, several others burned, and Candide beaten to the accompaniment of music. He is led to inquire, "If this is the best of possible worlds, what are the others?"

Plague, war, cruelty, vice, and suffering cram the pages of the story as it progresses. The concluding scenes take place in Constantinople. Pangloss, recovered from the hanging at Lisbon, reappears as a galley-slave, still optimistic, although in despair at not teaching in a German university. Candide finds and marries his Cunégonde, who has become most unattractive, albeit restored to life. The group form the project of farming. Pangloss goes off in a discourse on the great ones of earth from Eglon of Moab to Henry IV, when Candide interrupts, "I know also that it is necessary to cultivate our garden." Pangloss agrees, because man was put into Eden *ut operaretur eum*, and even Candide's pessimistic traveling companion, Martin, can chime in on the theory of "work without reasoning—it is the only way to render life endurable." All unite. The farm flourishes. Even the ugly Cunégonde becomes an excellent pastry cook. Pangloss bursts with the confidence that this outcome proves ours to be the

best of possible worlds. Candide retorts, "Well said, but it is necessary to cultivate our garden."

If the final note of the *Poème* is hope, the outcome of *Candide* is work. Each faces the black facts of life with a frankness often enough cynical—grimacing, says Flaubert; yet neither reveals Voltaire becoming a pessimist. Rather, each shows him struggling away from pessimism, toward what we should call a meliorism based either upon religious faith or on activity (romanticism or activism). That the conclusion of *Candide* is Voltaire's sincere opinion at this time, Morize shows by numerous citations from his correspondence of the period 1756-59.

IV

From Voltaire we turn to his even more baffling contemporary Jean Jacques Rousseau, in whose mind the Lisbon earthquake aroused feelings very different from Voltaire's.

In 1755 Rousseau was living with his mistress, Thérèse le Vasseur. In 1756 he withdrew to the Hermitage at Montmorency, assigning as a reason for his leaving Geneva the presence of Voltaire near that city. It was also in that year that Rousseau sent his famous letter to Voltaire criticizing the *Poème*. During the next ten years there was a bitter feud between the two men, in which Voltaire went beyond all bounds in assailing Rousseau.

Rousseau's letter to Voltaire concerning the earthquake is dated August 18, 1756. Rousseau himself gives us an account of his motive in writing it. Says he, in his *Confessions*, "Struck by seeing this poor man [Voltaire] overwhelmed, if I may so speak, with prosperity and honor, bitterly exclaiming against the miseries of this life, and finding everything wrong, I formed the mad project of making him turn his attention to himself, and of proving that everything was right." This implies that Rousseau's prime interest was in the tragedy of the existence of Voltaire rather than in the tragedy of Lisbon; but this subjective bias did not exclude important ideas of wider significance from the letter.

The famous letter¹ begins with praise of the charms of Voltaire's poetry, asserting that he had read, "loving you as my brother,

¹ *Oeuvres complètes de J. - J. Rousseau* (Paris, 1883), IV, 238-46.

honoring you as my master." But Rousseau turns at once to a penetrating criticism of the *Poème sur le désastre*, the chief points of which we may summarize as follows:

1. Voltaire makes things worse than they were before he wrote. "Pope's poem," says Rousseau, "helps me to patience; yours reduces me to despair." Optimism has at least the merit of consoling! Rousseau here overlooks Voltaire's "hope" at the close of the poem.

2. If evil drives Voltaire to the dilemma of choosing between the omnipotence and the goodness of God, "why do you wish to justify his power at the expense of his goodness?" That is, why argue that an omnipotent God must relieve suffering, instead of arguing that a good God who permits suffering evidently cannot help it. In choosing "between two errors," Rousseau, with Mill, James, Wells, Rashdall, and Schiller, prefers what we should call a finite God to Voltaire's omnipotent riddle.

3. Most of the evils at Lisbon are the result, not of the work of Nature, but of man, such as "the 20,000 five- or six-story houses built so close together."

4. There must be earthquakes "unless the order of the world is to change according to our caprice." So Rousseau; so also Pope and Leibnitz would have spoken. Voltaire had rebelled against the idea of law in his *Poème*.

5. Sudden death, as at Lisbon, is not "always a real evil." In the ordinary course of things the victims might have suffered much more.

6. "If to be is better for us than not to be, it would be enough to justify our existence, even if we should have no compensation to look for from the evils that we have to suffer." Here Rousseau faces a fundamental issue. Voltaire, he implies, is using an abstract and absolute standard of value, such as perfect, painless pleasure, and, finding that life does not conform to that standard, argues that life has no value. Rousseau meets this by making value relative to the actual experience of the worth of human life, measured by the conscious preferences of men. Anything which is preferred by a conscious being to non-existence is of value.

7. Rousseau agrees with Voltaire's estimate of the value of the individual to such a degree that he can say, "Doubtless this material universe ought not to be dearer to its author than a single thinking and feeling being; but the system of this universe, which produces, conserves, and perpetuates all thinking and feeling beings ought to be dearer than a single one of those beings; he can, then, despite his goodness, sacrifice something of the happiness of the individual to the conservation of the whole." Here we find Rousseau attempting to solve the problem of "the world and the individual" by a road that, with Pope, recognizes the rights of the system, and also, with Voltaire, recognizes the ultimate value of the individual. Of the two factors, it is clear which is prior in Rousseau's thought. The system acquires value through its relation to personalities. "Things," as he strikingly expressed it, "ought to be considered relatively in the physical order and absolutely in the moral order." This personalistic theory of value underlies the Kantian doctrine of the dignity of the moral person. But the consistency of Rousseau's personalism in this field is marred by a concession to the rationalistic-absolutistic standpoint of Pope. "It is to be believed that particular events are nothing in the eyes of the Master of the Universe; that his Providence is solely universal; that he is satisfied with preserving genera and species and with presiding over the whole, without being disturbed at the manner in which each individual passes this short life." If indeed the system of Nature derives its value from its relation to "thinking and feeling beings," and the idea of God is to be used to ground value in the universe, it is most difficult to see how Rousseau could logically justify this last statement.

8. The value of a human life cannot be judged in the light of the mere present, or of "each particular instant of its duration," but rather with reference to "its total duration." The question of the value of an event like the Lisbon earthquake, he implies, is therefore inseparable from the question of "the immortality of the soul, which I have the happiness to believe." Thus he adds "the weight of hope to the equilibrium of reason." The pathetic contrast between the wealthy, famous Voltaire and the poor, obscure Rousseau—"you enjoy, but I hope"—closes the letter.

In this hope, as Höffding remarks, Rousseau agrees with Voltaire without noticing it.

V

The tragic event at Lisbon had its effect also on the philosopher of Königsberg. Kant's first and chief interest in the disaster is that of the natural scientist, concerned, not with the values involved, but with causal explanation. His writings on the subject were all published early in 1756 in the form of articles in the local weekly paper of Königsberg. The first article is entitled, "Von den Ursachen der Erderschütterungen bei Gelegenheit des Unglücks, welches die westliche Länder von Europa gegen das Ende des vorigen Jahres betroffen hat."¹ The article defends the view that the movement of earthquakes follows parallel to the course of rivers. There is no reference to the problems in which the present investigation is concerned.

Kant's second article was entitled, "Geschichts- und Naturbeschreibung der merkwürdigsten Vorfälle des Erdbebens, welches an dem Ende des 1755ten Jahres einen grossen Teil der Erde erschüttert hat." While still remaining in the realm of descriptive science, this title implies that Kant sees in the earthquake a wider significance than before, inasmuch as he describes it as extending to "a great part of the earth." And the article itself is less rigorously descriptive than the previous one. The opening paragraph departs from the tone of science, and hints at the meaning and value of the event. "Even the fearful instruments of the devastation of the human race, earthquakes, the raging of the sea stirred to its depths, mountains giving forth fire, challenge man to contemplation, and are no less implanted by God in Nature as a just consequence of constant laws than other more familiar causes of inconvenience, which are generally regarded as more natural merely because we are better acquainted with them. . . . Man perhaps learns in this fashion to see that this battleground of his desires should not rightly contain the goal of all his purposes." One may inquire as to whether Kant is here foreshadowing his critical theories regarding the transcendental element in morality,

¹ For Kant's writings on Lisbon see his *Werke*, edited by the Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1902-), I, 417-72.

or whether he alludes merely to the belief in immortality (so more probably). The only other reference to the valuation of the event is found in one of the final sections, entitled "On the Use of Earthquakes." The chief point, and no very profound one, of Kant's remarks here is that the same conditions that produce earthquakes also produce hot springs and metals in mountains, and improve atmospheric conditions. As a theodicy these ideas are worthy of Pangloss. In his concluding remarks he says that we should not regard earthquakes as penalties for sin, but should be aroused by them to a greater love of humanity; and further, we should look on ourselves as part, not as the whole, of Nature (quite in the mood of Pope and Leibnitz). His concluding thought recurs to the theme of immortality. "Man is not born to build eternal dwellings in this scene of vanity. . . . His whole life has a much higher purpose. . . . The goods of earth can afford no satisfaction to our desire for happiness."

Kant's third and last article on Lisbon was published in April, 1756, and was entitled, "Fortgesetzte Betrachtungen der seit einiger Zeit wahrgenommenen Erderschütterungen." The article is entirely natural-scientific, and inconsequential.

This exhausts the lists of Kant's writings that bear directly on the earthquake. It does not fall within the limits of the present investigation to show the logical relation of Kant's later writings to the religious evaluation of events in Nature. It is, however, of interest to mention the essay of 1791, "Ueber das Misslingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee,"¹ which rejects all optimism of the Leibnitzian stamp. The reason, Kant here argues, is incapable of understanding the relation of the world to the Highest Wisdom, and the practical reason is unable to answer the questions of the speculative. Nevertheless in the practical reason "God himself becomes interpreter of his will proclaimed through the creation; and this interpretation we may name an *authentic theodicy*." There is then no "doctrinal theodicy" (no speculative proof), but there is an "authentic theodicy," which finds in the practical reason "the immediate declaration and voice of God whereby he gives a meaning to the letter of his creation." In the

¹ *Op. cit.*, VIII, 253-71.

experience of the worth of the personal life, and not in abstract theory, is found the key to the meaning and value of the whole of Nature. Thus Kantian criticism carries out the suggestions of Rousseau.

VI

A survey of the value-judgments passed on the disaster at Lisbon should not omit a reference to the opinions of George Whitefield and John Wesley, who embody the evangelical mind of the eighteenth century.

On March 16, 1754, Whitefield was in Lisbon for about a month, en route to America. The religious life of the city inspired his *Letters on the Popery of Lisbon*,¹ which describe and denounce the lack of civil and religious liberty, and "Good Friday's tragic-comical superstitious, idolatrous farce." Afterward, on receiving news of the earthquake of 1755, he commented, "O that all who were lately destroyed in Portugal had known the divine redeemer! Then the earthquake would have been only a rumbling chariot to bring them to God. Poor Lisbon! How soon are all thy riches and superstitious pageantry swallowed up." This utterance displays commendable restraint. It implies that immortality is for him the only solution of the tragedies of this life.

In John Wesley's journal, under the date December 26, 1755, is found the entry, "Being much importuned thereto, I wrote 'Serious Thoughts on the Earthquake at Lisbon'; directed, not as I designed at first, to the small vulgar, but to the great; to the learned, rich, and honourable Heathens, commonly called Christians." This essay² was printed before the end of the year 1755 under the title, "Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Late Earthquake at Lisbon." He opens with the view that God may be making "inquisition for blood"; "if so, it is not surprising, he should begin there, where so much blood has been poured on the ground like water." He would clearly adjudge the catastrophe as good and right because it is an expression of divine judgment

¹ For the letters see Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield, B.A., of Pembroke College, Oxford*. London, 1877.

² *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 3d American complete and standard edition (New York, no date), VI, 238-47.

on sin. He also regards a recent similar event in England, "the affair of Whitson cliffs," in the same light, as a mark of God's displeasure. This phenomenon is, he asserts, inexplicable by natural causes, such as fire, water, or air; therefore, he infers, only God can be its cause, thus fulfilling the Scripture, "There shall be σεισμοί (not only earthquakes, but various concussions or shakings) in divers places." Man, he continues, tries to screen himself from this conclusion by the view that "all these things are purely natural and accidental; the result of natural causes. But there are two objections to this answer: first, it is untrue; secondly, it is uncomfortable." It is untrue "because God works in or by natural causes." The logic of this argument is difficult to reconcile with the context. If these events are not the result of natural causes, as Wesley believes, what relevancy does it have to assert that God works in such causes? Or if he took seriously the view that God so works, why was he concerned to prove that the events did not have natural causes? He was evidently confusedly struggling away from the transcendent God of deism to the immanent God of theism. Man's appeal to natural causes he found uncomfortable, because the naturalistic view leaves us no hope; one may not "intreat the famine or the pestilence to show mercy."

Wesley closes with an appeal to take the hope of immortality seriously. He reminds his readers that Halley's comet, due in 1758, may perhaps "set the earth on fire and burn it to a coal." He apparently assumes that any experience is of value if it, or reflection on it, leads humanity to prepare for immortality; and that no experience is of value if it have not this effect. The Christian "groans (but they are pleasing groans) to have mortality swallowed up of life." Without the hope of immortality we should have to be pessimists (he does not use the word), even supposing "you have utterly driven away storms, lightnings, earthquakes, comets." For death "spoils all your mirth, diversions, pleasures! It turns all into the silence of a tomb, into rottenness and dust." If hope be a dream, "it is a pleasing dream. *Maneat mentis gratissimum error.*" In other words, he relies on the pragmatic proof of immortality as the basis for all our valuations of life.

VII

Our last witness to the value of the Lisbon earthquake is a child, six years of age, little Johann Wolfgang Goethe, born in 1749. His testimony is recorded in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where he tells us, "By an extraordinary world-event, the calm of the boy's spirit was moved to its depths for the first time." After a description of the earthquake, he comments, "God, the creator of heaven and earth, whom the explanation of the first article of faith represented to him as so wise and merciful, had proved himself to be in no wise fatherly in giving over righteous and unrighteous to destruction. In vain the young spirit sought to overcome these impressions, which was the less possible, as the wise men and the biblical scholars were not able to unite on a way of looking at such a phenomenon." In other words, the boy tested the value of the event by its consistency with the most universal and unifying idea that he possessed. Finding the result unsatisfactory, he discovered that his whole system of values was endangered.

VIII

Summarizing the chief results of the present investigation for the history of thought in the eighteenth century, we may note that the earthquake of 1755 was in some sense the occasion of the expression and perhaps to a degree of the development of the following factors:

1. The moderation of Voltaire's pessimism, with some emphasis on his hope for immortality as the only solution of life's problems; and a heightened sense of the practical value of labor as a relief from futile speculations.
2. A deepening of Rousseau's optimism, accompanied by faith in immortality and a high valuation of individual human personality (which Voltaire shared).
3. In the case of Kant, an illustration of his predominant interest in natural science in 1756, and of the immature and vague character of his religious philosophy at this time, as contrasted with the firm lines of his later essay on "The Failure of All Philosophical Attempts in Theodicy."

4. In Wesley's case, interest in immortality was fundamental; he seems also to have been experiencing a shift in philosophical basis away from the traditional idea of the exclusive transcendence of God in the direction of the divine immanence, a thought that was to dominate nineteenth-century religious philosophy.

5. In general, a tendency away from the abstract and purely rational to the concrete and empirical. In other words, signs of dissatisfaction with rationalism—the end of the reign of Pope and Leibnitz.

IX

In addition to the particular historical facts just mentioned, this investigation has suggested certain general considerations regarding the nature of value, which philosophy of religion ought to take into account. These considerations are not to be regarded as true because one stage in the history of thought implies or points to them; but they may well be treated as worthy of serious attention.

1. The first point is one which has perhaps been implied in the very nature of our method; or, even worse, may be so obvious as to be trite. It is that valuations are, in a peculiar sense, the result of a thinker's whole "apperceptive mass." Only Voltaire could have written *Candide*. Only John Wesley could have written *Serious Thoughts*. It is impossible to separate one's judgments of value from one's total system of ideas, and understand them in isolation (*pace* the new realism). Of mathematical, of scientific, of logical judgments this proposition would perhaps not be valid in the same sense. But value-judgments are functions of a whole personal life. This conclusion is in agreement with the thought of a philosopher like Bowne, who finds in the values of religion an ideal compounded of intellect, conscience, affection, and all our manifold interests and tendencies;¹ or, from a different point of view, Hocking, who regards value as a function of what he calls the "whole-idea." "The person," he says, "is *all in the pleasure*"—"any given pleasure echoes into the whole cavern of a self, and varies in quantity with the volume and resonance of that cavern."²

¹ B. P. Bowne, *Theism* (New York, 1902), pp. 22 f.

² W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven, 1912), p. 549 and *passim*.

2. As a corollary of the preceding, and of the second historical observation above, we may say that value-judgments often tend to presuppose a high regard for the individual human personality, a regard that Pope had denounced as pride. Voltaire carries this regard for the individual to such an extreme that he even revolts against the idea of natural law, because of its indifference to the individual. The hope of immortality also embodies this valuation of the individual.

3. The investigation tends to show that extremely optimistic valuations of human life are the result of an emphasis on the system of the universe, regarded abstractly, i.e., without explicit reference to the particulars of which it is made up. This is most clear in Pope, Leibnitz, and Rousseau (in his most excessively optimistic mood); and it was this tendency against which Voltaire most emphatically revolted, and which Rousseau himself implicitly repudiated in his more moderate mood. Thoroughgoing rationalism and thoroughgoing optimism thus go hand in hand. Strangely enough, however, the comradeship is a fatal one, for the individual in such a theory ultimately has no value at all, as we have pointed out above.

4. By contrast, extreme pessimistic valuations would result from an emphasis on particular, empirical details, regarded abstractly, without reference to the system to which they belong. The idea, common to Wesley, Voltaire, and Rousseau, that pessimism is the outcome of the denial of immortality, would be one kind of illustration of the logic of this principle. It is, however, noteworthy that no great mind expressed the completely pessimistic view of the Lisbon earthquake.

5. Making explicit the principle thus suggested, we come to a formula like this: any event is to be judged as of value if it arouses states of consciousness compatible on the one hand with the dignity of human personality, and on the other hand with one's total system of ideas about reality as a whole.

6. Unless human personality is a permanent part of the system of reality (i.e., unless immortality be true) on such premises as those just mentioned it is inconsistent to ascribe value to any event which destroys human life; for whatever be one's ideas of

the rest of the universe, it cannot be valuable to destroy that which possesses dignity or intrinsic value. Hence the only bases for either optimism or meliorism are either Pope's (a disregard for the value of the individual), or Voltaire's, Rousseau's, Wesley's, and Kant's (the hope of immortality). The renewed interest in immortality resulting from the Great War indicates that this result is not local to the eighteenth century, but may be the natural and logical course of thought in the presence of the evils of life.